

Surprise PACKAGE

Husqvarna went back to the drawing board and came up with a masterpiece

WORDS // SAM MACLACHLAN / ADAM RIEMANN / CHARLIE COSTANZO PICS // SAM MACLACHLAN

What did you think the first time you saw Husqvarna's new 449/511 range? My first reaction was "different!" And I like different.

But for Husqvarna, the replacement line-up of what has become the best value brand on the market had to work, and work well. The old TE450 and fire-breathing TE510 were dated, and let's face it, the TC450 never really impressed anybody as a full blooded racer, as good as it was for the average man.

So when we fronted up for the Aussie launch, after having re-read Jono Bentman's world launch numerous times (October issue), and faced with some really challenging conditions (see the Test Conditions panel, right), we knew we had the perfect place to test these new weapons on Aussie conditions. We certainly had the testers – Riemann was in an enduro frenzy, and Charlie was ready to "own" the wicked motocross track The Paul

Feeney Group had at our disposal.

Shortly after arriving, we knew we not only had new models here, but it was almost like we had a whole new brand. These are the first progeny of the Husqvarna/BMW alignment, and it's clear the three newbies have used plenty of BMW thinking, with some Husky know-how thrown in. There is plenty different about these bikes, such as a linkage-equipped Co-axial mount swingarm, full KYB suspenders instead of the Sachs rear shock (the fork has been KYB since the 2010 models), an oddly-placed two-litre fuel cell, out there styling and more.

By the time we got on board, we were frothing to work out what all this change, innovation and refinement amounted to. Charlie bumbled straight to the custom-built motocross track, while Adam headed for the trees and I alternated between both. What we found was both exciting and suprising. Charlie got back to camp with his findings first...

TEST CONDITIONS: As with every Husqvarna launch for the last two years, it was wet – very wet. The single-track loops were mud-fests, as were the grass tracks, however the motocross track and trailride (40km) sections were tacky with zero dust.



ENDURO BOY ON MXER

Having carved through the bush loops long enough to be comfortable with the TE449, I tried to sneak in a lap of the motocross track, but was promptly shuffled off by Husky's Joerg Hoffman. "No TEs on the motocross track, but take the TC if you like." So with that I scoped out what had become a slick, soupy track with some decent sized jumps. Immediately, the TC feels like a lighter, sharper, more agro version of the TE. It responds quicker at the crack of the throttle and the clutch seems to engage a little faster, too. It feels more agile between your legs and is very willing to steer under power through turns. It barely has time to "get squirly" in rutted turns, as the coaxial rear seems to push it into a stable pose and drive it out of the corner. The engine's power feels stronger than the TE, but perfectly suited to the greasy MX track. I also like how balanced the bike felt through the air and that it could handle big flat landings. — *Riemann*

LIKES

-  WELL-PRICED
-  PAINTED CASES
REDUCED
CORROSION
-  QUALITY
PARTS
STANDARD

DISLIKES

-  REAR
FENDER LOOK
AND FEEL
-  SIDE PANELS
LOOK WEIRD
TO ME
-  HYDRAULIC
SLAVE
CYLINDER SNAGS
YOUR BOOT

TC449	
ENGINE	
Capacity	449cc
Bore x stroke	98 x 59.6mm
Cooling	Liquid
Engine type	Single-cyl, 4-stroke, DOHC
Transmission	5-speed
Clutch	Hydraulic, multi-disc
Fuel capacity	8.5L
Fuel system	Fuel-injection
DIMENSIONS	
Claimed dry weight	108kg
Wheelbase	1490mm
Claimed seat height	963mm
Ground clearance	335mm
SUSPENSION	
Fork	Kayaba USD 300mm travel
Shock	Kayaba 300mm travel
BRAKES	
Front	Brembo, 260mm disc
Rear	Brembo, 240mm disc
RUNNING GEAR	
Front tyre	Pirelli Scorpion MX, 21in
Rear tyre	Pirelli Scorpion MX, 18in
PRICE	
RRP	\$11,495
Distributor	The Paul Feeney Group
www.husqvarnamotorcycles.com.au	

SNAP POWER

Engine-wise, Husqvarna has focused their development on ridability above peak horsepower. While still delivering good overall grunt, the engine has an electric-like power spread which pulls from zero right through to the limiter. It is unlike any other open class motocrosser in that regard, except maybe the Yamaha YZ450F, which can be tuned that way with its Power Tuner.

It has less hits than the Aussie cricket team through the rev range, unlike most of its competitors. This proved its worth on a slippery test day, finding traction and using the full potential of the engine was not an issue at all. The power does feel flat, but that's mainly the delivery talking – it has plenty.

The bike comes standard with a 46mm single flap EFI system (the TE uses two flaps for a more progressive delivery) which provides flawless throttle control. There's also a handlebar-mounted switch, with two mapping settings (soft and hard, though the bike needs to be stationary to swap). I tried both numerous times, finding the power much nicer in the hard setting, due to the overall spread being so smooth and linear already.

The soft curve is a lot softer and makes a noticeable difference, but I find it too lazy off the bottom for my riding style and requires too much clutch to get it ripping through the turns – the switch stayed on hard for the day.

One thing that really stands out is the the engine's power curve is super-broad – it can be revved like a small bore or lugged like a real open classer. I believe this makes it a very versatile race bike for a huge range of riders, though those looking for butt-puckering thrills won't get them: it's too smooth for that!

Vibration has been kept to a minimum with the new counterbalancer system and shifting and clutch operation show no obvious issues on test day. The electric start is a keeper, too.

PLATFORM ENGINEERING

The chassis is where the new Husky really grabbed my attention. The TC449 boasts the unique "Coaxial Traction System" matched up with a KYB fork and shock (with linkage). The bike was jackhammer hard at first, due to it being brand spanking new, but after only 30mins of monster jumps, hard landings and some heavy throttle braking, it began to show its true colours and really shine.

**"IT CAN BE REVVED LIKE A
SMALL-BORE OR LUGGED LIKE A
REAL OPEN-CLASSER"**

The twin-chamber KYB fork is super plush, while still delivering impressive bottoming resistance. I'm a renowned clicker fiddler, never stopping until I'm happy – after the whole day I only came out two clicks on the compression (16 clicks) and was happy, which surprised even me.

At the rear is where most of the action was happening and I went through many changes to get it working like I wanted it. The Husky boys were sick of me by the end!

Firstly I tried to free up the shock and get more drive on the slick surface by speeding the rebound up by four clicks from standard. This worked well, but the downside (there's always one) was it ended up riding low in the stroke. To counter this, I mucked around with high speed compression and spring preload adjustments, adding half a turn of preload for 103mm of rider sag.

For a standard bike, I was really satisfied on the track, finding the bike turned as well on the flat as it does in the ruts, and while the overall package is plush and on the softer side for a modern MX bike, it gave me incredible confidence when pushing hard. It allowed me to really lean on and put a lot of weight on the front-end.

The new Co-axial Traction System rear-end will have to wait for the 450 MX Shootout (check out the March issue) at Lakes MX track before I comment fully, but finding drive and traction seems to be its strength and I can't wait to test it there on the square edge bumps and chopped-up hills.

TO SUM UP

Husqvarna has not held back one bit with their all-new beast and the bike comes standard with quality Braking rotors, black Excel rims, Brembo hydraulic clutch with adjustable levers, tapered bars, Pirelli tyres, electric start, full Titanium Akrapovic exhaust system and more – awesome value for \$11,495.

Out on the track, my experience exceeded my expectation and I am most impressed by Husqvarna's efforts in building the bike from the ground-up, although some of its features take a bit to get used to.

For instance, the new frame positions your feet well wide of the one-piece side panels, creating a void for your knees. I also slipped off the pegs a few times, and I had to rotate my normal pose a little to get a real hold of the bike over jumps.

Those little things aside, the bike sounds awesome, is easy to get comfortable with and looks like no other on this planet. With the ADB 450 MX Shootout just around the corner, I feel Husky is now ready for a real fight.

MXER ON ENDURO

In the afternoon, I threw a leg over the TE449 to compare it to the TC – wow, what a bike! I, like the others at the launch, immediately gelled with it and felt comfortable. The TE range is noticeably toned down from the TC, as you'd expect, mainly in the suspension settings and power delivery being focused for an off-road application. With that said, I found the TE449 super-impressive with its torque and over-rev capabilities, along with the chassis set-up, encouraging you to hold it on the gas just a little bit longer. The TE range drips with the same trick engineering as the TC449 and has proven, like all modern bikes, actual set-up is as sensitive as it is critical. From here on, the Shootouts will let us see where we are at. The bottom line is, it is a much better bike than the previous model – *Costanzo*

LIKES

👍 AKRAPOVIC
EXHAUST
STANDARD

👍 SHOCK LINKAGE
TUCKS AWAY
CLEAR OF ROCKS
AND LOGS

👍 KAYABA REAR
SHOCK

DISLIKES

👎 MUD
COLLECTING
AROUND FUEL CAP

👎 CAUGHT MY
BOOT ON
PROTRUDING
CLUTCH CASING,
INTERFERED WITH
BRAKING

👎 SIDESTAND IS
STILL DIFFICULT
TO DEAL WITH

TE449	
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“THE TE449 IS A MAKE OR BREAK MODEL FOR HUSQVARNA”

ELECTRO TRACTOR

The most immediate impression at the crack of the throttle is a hauntingly familiar drive, emulated through the co-axial rear end – it's so BMW G 450 X! This alone has changed the whole dynamic of the Husky, as the amalgamated BMW engine is inherently more centralised, giving the bike a lighter, less-cumbersome feel. Its refined EFI and ignition also gives a similar sewing machine-smooth delivery of a Yamaha WR450F. It's hard to really pinpoint a strength in its power, as the curve is so linear across the range, but this makes it ideal for dialing-in drive across slick terrain or boosting off technical obstacles. The power is responsive, consistently strong through the mid-range, and tapers smoothly into a mild over-rev.

MUD GUN

I liked the fact the muddy conditions would be a true test of how the new TE449 would actually cope when it counts. She feels every bit as large as the old bike, but with a whole new slender feel through the tank and seat, given the seat runs right up to the steering stem with no trace of a fuel tank around your groin.

The tank and cap start at the back of the seat and is housed where a conventional bike's airbox and carburettor would sit. The whole arrangement of the extra-wide rear guard, fuel cap and seat is like nothing you've ever seen before, especially given it looks like some kind of robotic insect abdomen. While it does make for a great spot to sit your helmet, it's also dysfunctional as it collects mud around the mouth of the tank.

Up front, the 'bar mounts have a new offset clamp and a comfortably swept set of handlebars. I didn't feel cramped, it didn't feel foreign, and – most importantly – I took very little time to ease into its ride characteristics. It seems the two biggest issues of the old Husky and BMW have been addressed in the new TE449. Where the old TE's Sachs shock would struggle to put horsepower to the ground in rough conditions, the new co-axial drive – dressed with a linkage and KYB shock – will hook up almost anywhere. And, where the drive of the BMW co-axial

system would thrust the bike into situations its steering simply couldn't handle, the TE449 front-end coaxes its mass into ruts and aggressive cornering with ease. Along with the addition of the new KYB rear shock unit, the front-to-rear balance of the bike seems void of any ejector-seat traits or scary deflections, mainly thanks to the new linkage, which Husqvarna are still dialing in. In saying that, I did take the time to dial the front to my liking by slowing the compression and speeding up the rebound a few clicks, as well as raising the fork through the clamps to lower the front. I then put my changes into practice by engaging in a sprint through the enduro special test with Glenn Kearney. The fact I was pushing a stock bike at that pace in such slick conditions is a credit to the predictable handling of the TE449.

IT'S A WRAP

The TE449 is a make or break model for Husqvarna. It had to be a big improvement on the old model and it had to come out swinging in the biggest, most competitive class in the off-road market. Its ergonomics and radical frame design grows on you. But, does it work?

For 2011, the Husky is a hybrid of engineering between two manufacturers and has taken what were the best performance traits of two entirely different machines and merged them into one very bush-savvy beast!

The signature rumble of the old grunt-factory TE engine has been replaced by an electric-smooth version of the torque-spewing G 450 X donk, complete with the empty engine mount holes the old Beemer used to fill. Throw in BMW's tractable co-axial drive system and the steering stability of Husky, and you've got a bike which can maintain speed in extreme conditions.

It really is the bike BMW should have built, but I see positives in sacrificing the G 450 X for the benefit of the next generation of Husky's big TEs. It's a funky looking machine and my guess is it will cement itself as a competitive race machine in serious enduro, as well as being a standout, functional and affordable trail bike.



FRAME RATE

Husqvarna has gone with a steel frame for the new beasts. The lower frame rails are very different, wider than the uppers by some margin, but it is a very strong frame, with excellent flex characteristics – there us nothing harsh about this bike.

Tech FEATURE

It's not just the styling of the 449 which is radical – there is plenty of trick engineering under the skin, which helps give it stellar riding characteristics.



AIRBOX

The airfilter positioning, as it did on the BMW, has its advantages, but the fact it takes the removal of five bolts to access it is a real downer. If anything changes in coming models, this needs to.



SHOCKING STUFF

The Sachs shock of Huskies old didn't have many friends, and the addition of a quality KYB shock, boxed as it is by the CTS and new linkage, has made a whole world of difference to how a big-bore Husky drives and is balanced – all for the better! The different feel from the rear-end is undeniable – it's not weird, just a solid, dependable feel. It works on the motocross track and in the bush. While the factory is recommending around 45mm of sag, we found 50mm closer to the mark.

SO FINE 4-4-9

The engine cylinder angle helps the bike feel agile, though not to the same degree as the Husaberg. Fuelling is flawless and the power is as linear as it gets, but still with plenty of kick up top. The gear shift is particularly light, but good luck changing a gearlever quickly in the bush – access to it is hindered by the CTS system and consequent frame design. The electric start appears as solid as on the 250/310 at this early stage, too.



6 WEIRD THINGS THAT WORK:

- 1st Co-axial Traction System: mechanically a nightmare, but provides awesome tractability
- 2nd Rear-mounted tank: makes airfilter changes a hassle, but bike feels well-balanced
- 3rd Strange front and rear fenders, but they're strong
- 4th Long seat: there's no shortage of room to move on this chair
- 5th Rear fuel tank filler cap: just like you're gassing up an F1 car
- 6th Secondary clear fuel tank: lowers weight and enables you to visually check the last two-litres of precious fuel

"IT WILL TEST A MOTOCROSSER'S PEER PRESSURE RESISTANCE"



TO SUM UP...

As we said at the beginning, the new Husqvarnas have to be good – and, simply put, they are when compared to the 2010 versions.

The TE449's CTS, KYB suspension, more user-friendly engine and superior stability, mixed with good steering and a great price, will certainly mean the bike will be a good showing at the next 450cc Shootout and in the marketplace.

The build quality is as good as ever. Australian Husqvarna importers, The Paul Feeney Group, are currently shifting to new premises to fit in the extra stock of parts and accessories, and after-sales support is reaching new levels for Husqvarna, with the imposing presence of BMW in the background.

The one downside I can see is the average trailrider's acceptance of all this radical change. The key thing here is, the TE is different to look at, but has none of the awkwardness you'd expect. Just get on it and wring the throttle, or cruise at your usual pace, and it is no different to anything else in a very competitive class, as far as rideability goes. It is a big bike, so smaller riders may be wary of it, but as far as first impressions go, the TE449 is a very good bike (see next issue for the wrap on the TE511).

The answer for the TC449 is harder. While it's a good bike, it delivers its power so much mellower than its Open class rivals, and is styled so differently to any of those, it will test a raw motocrosser's Peer Pressure resistance to join the Husky club.

That aside, it's a good motocrosser, and eons better than the TC450 it replaces – it deserves to gain wider acceptance. See next issue's 450 MX Shootout to see how it fares – it will do better than the last TC450! **ADB**